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The Living City staff wishes you Merry Chri... and Happy New Year.

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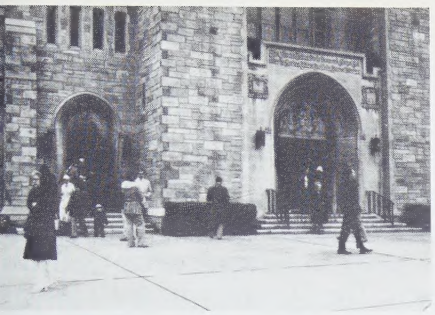

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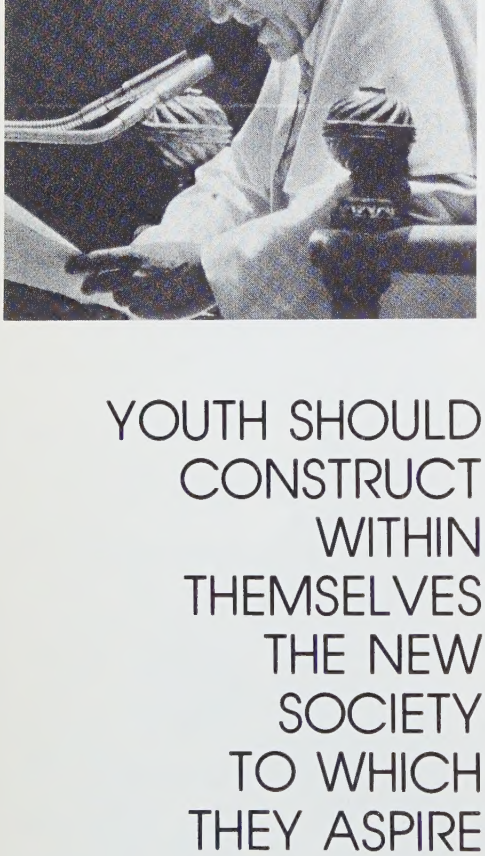


YOUTH SHOULD CONSTRUCT WITHIN THEMSELVES THE NEW SOCIETY TO WHICH THEY ASPIRE

Excerpt from John Paul II's address to the young people of France at Lourdes on August 15, 1983.

"Blessed are you, Mary, you who believed!" (cf. Lk. 1:46).

Mary leads us first of all to *believe.*

To believe in the love of God the Father that is constantly lavished upon us; it is not we who have loved God, it is he who has loved first.

To believe in the power of Christ manifested in the Redemption. He is the saving God proclaimed by Isaiah. He is the source of life.... He is the truth of God and the truth of our poor lives. He is the way of God and the way of man, the only man fully conformed to his vocation.

To believe in the Holy Spirit which Mary embraced without reservation and which is given to us also.

May Mary help us, then, to accept the announcement of the love of God with a simple heart, to believe in it despite the doubts that society and our own mind suggest to our heart! Let us not be afraid! And if these difficulties remain, we shall pray to grow in the faith in spite of them or rather because of them, for that is how our trust and fidelity are tried. We will be wise enough to nourish our faith by thorough study of the Word of God and of uninterrupted meditation of the Church, the living Tradition. And we shall seek to know the truth in our life so as to see the light.

"For nothing is impossible with God!" (cf. Lk. 1:37).

We accept this promise of the angel to Mary. We need the *hope* that sustains faith. Many today are disconcerted, worried or at a loss before the anxieties of our age: what of the future? Will we find a job? Who can resist the sins of society? What is needed to provide a solution to the world's big problems of hunger, war, infringements of human rights? Of what use is our good will for so many people? And finally, what is the sense of this life? Some feel useless in a world grown old; in a closed world, some feel incapable of doing anything. They even doubt the usefulness of being Christian.

We are certainly not dispensed from thinking out and realizing a costly and patient use of our liberty: this cannot be replaced by hope. But God shows us what we must first of all ask of him: the Holy Spirit, his Spirit who renews the face of the earth because he renews our spirit, our heart. Mary assented to the Holy Spirit. The Almighty did great things in her, he will do great things in us. He will move us to follow Christ. In tearing himself away from the temptations of power, wealth and pride, and by clinging to the ideal of the beatitudes, did not Christ inaugurate a world truly new? Let us count on him in hope; he will not disappoint us.

"Mary went in haste to the house of her cousin Elizabeth!" (cf. Lk. 1:39-40).

Faith and hope lead to love of neighbor. The quality of one's love determines the excellence of one's life. Tell me how you love and I shall tell you who you are.

Mary directs our attention, our heart, our hands towards others, as in the house of Elizabeth, as at Cana. We cannot fence ourselves up in the narrow circle of our interests, of our opinions. A fundamental communion unites us with those who are close to us, with the members of our family, with our fellow citizens, and also with those to whom we ought to behave as neighbors, such as those of the Third World, for we must constantly be open to universality. To love like God is not to have borders. Happy are those who make room for a child who arrives unexpectedly and who is rejected by others; for a person whom society thinks useless; for a person who is suffering in mind and body; for those who have disregarded their own human dignity.

This same openness of heart calls you to take heed of everything that can improve the lot of humanity: respect for life and for human dignity, the advent of a greater justice, the sharing of goods, fellowship and peace among peoples and social classes, the taking in of strangers, the reform of morals, the promotion of a culture worthy of the name, etc. It is all there for you to heed, to work for through tangible commitments, and thus to develop your talents to serve humanity better in all its dimensions, with our eyes fixed on Jesus, the sole model for humanity.

Reprinted from the *Osservatore Romano*, English Edition, August 15, 1983

CHIARA LUBICH ANSWERS

During her visits to Focolare communities in different countries, Chiara Lubich, founder of the Movement, has often been asked by members of the Focolare about its spirituality and ways of putting it into practice.

Question: The majority of us who work in Korea spend most of our time at work or in work-related activities. There is barely any time to think of other things. What would you suggest we do to have God at the center of our life just the same, in every moment of our day?

Answer: Our work, whatever it may be, is an expression of God's will. We must be aware of the fact that to love God we need not wait for Sunday. We can love him always. So when you work you are not wasting time, also in this sense.

There is something else: every job we do is usually geared to the benefit of humanity. However we seem to be aware that we are doing something useful for humanity when we help our neighbor with some good deed. We do not have this same awareness when we work for society in general, for instance. We should work not just to perform a duty nor simply to earn a living. We should work in order to serve Jesus in our society.

If we are in direct contact with the public like in a restaurant or a store, we can think of the words of Scripture: "...to give food to the hungry, to clothe the naked." No matter what kind of work we do we always come in contact with our neighbor.

At the beginning of the Movement Jesus helped us to understand that the whole law consists in the love of neighbor. We were happy then to think that we would be able to live this ideal of life at all times and everywhere.

Question: When you started to live the will of God, did you ever think that an entire Movement was going to follow you?

Answer: When I began to try and do the will of God I had no idea that a large movement would develop around me. I remember I was so taken by God who loved me (obviously there was a special grace) that my whole life was centered around this union. You could say that nothing else existed besides God and me. Everyone should make that experience — of feeling themselves personally loved by God. Even if you receive God's light through others it is still God who has loved you. As far as I am concerned, if I had been told at that time that others would have followed me, it would have spoiled something of that moment. Everything actually developed very spontaneously.

A NEW CODE FOR THE CHURCH

After twenty years of work, the Roman Catholic Church has produced a new Code of Canon Law which is meant to express in legal terms the intentions of the Second Vatican Council. The new code was promulgated on January 25, 1983 and became effective on November 27 this year. The following article was prepared after an interview with Fr. Tarcisio Bertone, Dean of the Faculty of Canon Law at the Salesian Pontifical University.

by ORESTE PALIOTTI

The previous Code of Canon Law, published in 1917, had quite obviously become outdated considering the social transformations which had since taken place in the world, and especially after the Second Vatican Council. In fact, even before the Council, many jurists had been anxiously seeking a reform of the Code.

Pope John XXIII, sensitive to the "signs of the times" announced on January 25, 1959, together with the Second Vatican Council, the reform of the Code and created a commission for this specific purpose on March 28, 1963. In 1965, Pope Paul VI, in a programmatic speech, gave the outline and basic criteria for the revision of the Code and the work began. He approved of the projects and outlines elaborated by the experts of the Central Commission for the revision and decided to send them to consult with the Episcopal Conferences all over the world, to the Catholic and Pontifical Universities, to the Law Faculties and to the representatives of Christian churches and denominations not yet in perfect communion with the Catholic Church. In fact, observers from the Anglican Church and the Eastern Orthodox Churches took part in the work of revision.

In 1980 the first provisional text of the new Code was published. Pope John Paul II enlarged the plenary commission by adding eighteen more members, for the most part from Third World nations and gave ample power to the Episcopal Conferences to propose modifications and additions to the text.

At a plenary assembly which took place from October 20 – 27, 1981, Pope John Paul II proposed the imminent promulgation of the Code and personally followed the final stages of revision until its publication last January 25.

It was an immense job and certainly not without its setbacks. For example, at one point in 1982 the Code was ready to be presented to the Pope when on March 22, 1982, Cardinal Felici, the president of the Central Commission, suddenly died in Foggia, Italy. The principal members of the Commission went to Foggia to attend the funeral and while returning to Rome were involved in a very serious car accident. It seemed at first that after all those years of work the new code was being blocked. But those moments of suffering bore fruit: even from a hospital bed the Code could be worked on and prepared for presentation to the Holy Father.

Then of course there was the personal contribution on the part of the Holy Father in the elaboration of the Code and his participation at the Commissions' very lengthy sessions. He was continually reading it, rewriting it, correcting it and discussing modifications, canon by canon, from June 1982 until Christmas and even afterwards.

MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH

What is really new about this code is its fidelity to the Council. The old code consisted of five books and it mirrored ecclesiology before the Second Vatican Council and the elaborate system of Roman Law. The new Code sets out the basis for the living life of the Church in seven books with 1752 canons instead of the original 2414. The new canons express much more precisely the mystery of the Church and the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council.

The first book, which contains the general laws, affirms among other things, that the laity can partake in the governing functions of the Church. For example, lay people can take part in various councils, especially at the local Church level, which deal with pastoral and parish matters, economical concerns and so on. They can have a real share of power in the government, in what was once called *jurisdiction* — serving as judges on ecclesiastical tribunals, such as marriage tribunals, and as assistants or delegates to conduct marriages when no priests or deacons are available.

The second book of the Code is entitled "The people of God" and is the key book because it is the one which most reflects the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council. Before the distinctions due to hierarchical functions, charisms, different vocations (in particular the consecrated life through the profession of the evangelical counsels), the fundamental principle of the equality of all the baptized is stressed through a sort of charter of fundamental rights and duties of the faithful.

The third book, and this too is new, affirms that the office of teaching in the Church concerns not only the hierarchy but all Christians, because they all (especially parents and lay catechists) have the responsibility to evangelize, to be announcers of the faith.

In the last book, which deals with the working of the Church courts including special cases and above all marriage procedures, there is a provision for appeal to a higher authority for actions which result in a violation of fundamental rights.

MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

The theology of the sacraments permeates the fourth book, which is specifically on the sacraments. On the subject of marriage the Code takes into account first of all the doctrine of the Second Vatican Council, especially *Gaudium et Spes* (n. 48-52), and with it all the ecclesial and human experience accumulated by the Church, especially through the matrimonial courts.

The words "psychiatry" and "psychology" appear in the Code for the first time, in Canon 1095, which deals with the incapacity to contract marriage. Among other things it says that those who from causes of a psychological nature are not able to take on the essential obligations of marriage, are not capable of contracting marriage. This canon is very important both for preparation for marriage, and also in procedures for the declaration of nullity. The contribution of the human sciences is stressed, in measuring the degree of maturity necessary to enter into marriage. This contribution will be taken into account in marriage tribunal proceedings. What should also be emphasized is the new spirit which permeates this part of the Code. First of all this is seen in the definition of marriage as a total communion of life (taken from *Gaudium et Spes*), and it is seen also in the revision of the impediments of marriage and in the concept of the "totality" of the aspects of marriage, so that the reasons for marriage are no longer listed in the order of their importance, although the procreative aspect is not underrated.

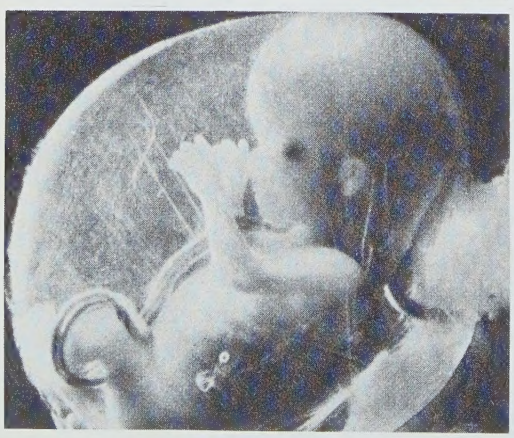
Greater emphasis is given to the period of preparation for marriage, which is considered decisive for the future life of the couple together. However, the rights and duties of parents are emphasized too, so the subject matter does not deal with the couple alone, but with the whole family. For example, there is a section on the rights and duties of parents in such matters as family catechesis, the admission to the sacraments and Christian initiation. For example, it is the parents together with the parish priest who admit and prepare children for first Communion. It is also concerned with Christian formation, the choice of school, and also the provision of supplementary formation where there is no school that can guarantee a true Christian formation. Evangelization, catechesis for different age groups, and the preparation for marriage itself are all dealt with in this section.

EXCOMMUNICATION AND PENANCES

Excommunication is a form of sanction which recognizes a situation wherein a person has put himself or herself outside or against the community by behavior which is antagonistic to the Church. "Excommunication" means "to put outside the community" and thus exclude from participation in the life and benefits of the Church. The object of this and of other sanctions, such as "interdict" and certain penances, is to encourage the person to repent and return to full communion. It is pre-eminently "medicinal" and corrective, not vindictive, so the expression "vindictive punishment" has been removed from the Code. A vindictive attitude is inconceivable on the part of the Church. The book on sanctions, which might appear to show an

ABOVE: The new code defines Matrimony as a total communion of life. It no longer refers to a hierarchy of goals in marriage.

According to the new Code of Canon Law, the laity can participate in the governing functions of the Church especially at the local Church level.



The number of violations resulting in automatic excommunication has been reduced from forty-two to seven and still applies for procuring abortion.

intransigence and rigor on the part of the Church is imbued with a spirit of very great mercy and gentleness. Some forms of automatic excommunication are still retained. These are applied automatically whenever one of the faithful commits a serious violation. But these excommunications have been reduced from forty-two to seven. This book, which had 220 canons has been reduced to eighty-nine. This reduction expresses a new attitude on the part of the Church. The most serious of excommunications *latae sententiae* which has been retained, is the excommunication of any Christian who desecrates the consecrated host. It also applies to anyone making an attempt on the life of the Pope, or for those who become heretics, schismatics or apostates from their own faith, and for procuring abortion. This last one is not new; it is the tradition of the ancient Church which always dealt with the sin of abortion with very severe penalties.

The word "marxism" was never included in the Code. The words "freemasonry" and "masonic sect" have been removed. The Code now states that anyone who subscribes to a sect or association which fights against the Church must be justly punished by the correct procedures and so it is not an automatic punishment. The punishments must be applied by the local Church authorities, through the Episcopal Conferences, who are best able to understand the situation and evaluate local attitudes.

BISHOPS AS PASTORS

The great reduction by more than 700 in the number of

canons from the Code of 1917 is explained by more frequent use of the so-called "particular right." In effect, the new Code says that Bishops, as pastors of the local Churches, must possess all the powers, usual, immediate and proper, to govern their local Churches. One canon says that they can dispense with the universal laws of the Church except those dispositions and dispensations which the Pope reserves to himself. This brings to the Latin Church, which was characterized by a degree of central government, a greater autonomy both in the individual dioceses and in the groups of local Churches comprising the Episcopal Conferences. So a greater part of the internal life of the Church will have to be determined by the Bishops and Episcopal Conferences. They were given a little time for the preparation before the new Code became effective on November 27.

Priests are defined as cooperators of the episcopal order and so the Code stresses their communion with the Bishops and their active participation in the life of the local churches, besides the authority and powers they can exercise by virtue of Holy Orders. There are many suitable bodies for them to participate in in the local Churches, such as the presbyteral, pastoral and financial councils of the diocese, the college of advisors which assists the bishops in pastoral government, and so on.

There is something new concerning the responsibility of the priest himself as a minister of the sacraments. Up to the present his authority to hear confessions and absolve sins was limited to his diocese. It was the bishop who gave this faculty to a priest within his jurisdiction. Now, once the priest has received his faculty for confession from his bishop, *ipso facto* he can hear confessions throughout the Catholic world. It is a sign of great trust, and shows their responsibility for the nature of the Church.

WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

The code takes into account the growing sensitivity toward the progress of women participating in society and in the Church. Excluding those activities which derive directly from Holy Orders, all others are open to women. So the role of women is given value in ecclesial life. For example, all those forms of participation in the government of the Church mentioned at the beginning are open to women. A woman can become a judge in ecclesiastical tribunals or can be authorized as an assistant to legalize marriages and so on. There are also many forms of participation in pastoral councils and in different ministries (including, of course, the conjugal ministry i.e. marriage).

The Church is also aware that a woman has a place that goes beyond any determined by law: it is that of bringing into effect the various charisms. From women such as St. Teresa of Avila, St. Catherine of Siena, or in our day Chiara Lubich or Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who have had a profound influence on the life of the Church in the 80's, we understand that the progress of women in the Church does not consist so much in sharing in certain roles traditionally entrusted to priests, but rather in bringing to life the charisms which the Holy Spirit gives and continues to extend to them for the good of the whole Church.

ECUMENISM

The ecumenical principle runs through the entire Code. First, it gives precise guidelines on the promotion of ecumenism by Catholics, which was impossible in the Code of 1917. Then it also provides the rules for setting up relationships with those who are baptized but outside the Catholic Church.

Above all, it establishes that the rules of ecclesiastical law apply only to Catholics, and this too is a change from the old law. Then it gives precise rules for the admission to the sacraments of non-Catholic Christians, especially to the Eucharist, the sacrament of Penance and the anointing of the sick.

When it is impossible for Catholics to receive these sacraments from a Catholic minister, they can ask for them from a non-Catholic minister. (This applies especially to the Eastern non-Catholic Churches.) The code contains all the legislation for mixed marriages, fully accepting the changes which have taken place in this area since the Second Vatican Council.

Regarding the faithful of other religions, the Church does not take up a defensive stance, but rather one of continuing dialogue. Evangelistic views are stressed, especially in the third book.

But generally speaking, the whole Code reflects the dialogue with secular society. One canon even refers to International Law. That means that the Church takes into account the laws of other organizations especially civil law, and works incessantly for the good of humanity, carrying out the mission entrusted to it by its Founder. □

GETTING IN THE ACT

by MICHELE ZANZUCCHI

In June of this year 400 young people of various artistic tendencies gathered for a new style of workshop.

> "Sometimes my instrument must be silent in order to act as a background or accompaniment to the others, so that a concert may emerge. Together we have composed a few notes, perhaps a few chords, of that fascinating symphony which is called unity."

Workshop — a laboratory, a place to work. It is the term which may well describe what many young people were trying to do in Loppiano,[1] under a warm June sun. But it can by no means give a true vision of what really happened and for lack of a better definition must be taken as a mere approximation, and a far-fetched one at that.

The narrow, winding streets of Loppiano which, typically for the rolling Tuscan countryside, climb over rather than circle around the rising hills, are interconnected, forming a network between the workshops' different headquarters. While parts of the scenery are particularly enchanting, the whole is never lacking in harmony. This is not merely due to the beauty of nature but to human cooperation as well — the old farmhouses where many of the workshops were held blend in with the cypresses, the rows of vineyards, the soft, undulating horizon, and so does the old convent called "Vivaio," a pleasing example of 16th century peasant architecture in Tuscany.

To put it simply, it would have been very hard to find a place better suited to house the 400 members of the first Gen Verde-Gen Rosso[2] Workshop. That doesn't mean that the accommodations were exactly refined and luxurious. But having to spend a couple of nights in a sleeping bag on the floor, having to dine on sandwiches and climb the steep slopes up and down to the various meeting places, is perhaps more conducive to creativity than featherbeds, caviar, and riding in a big car.

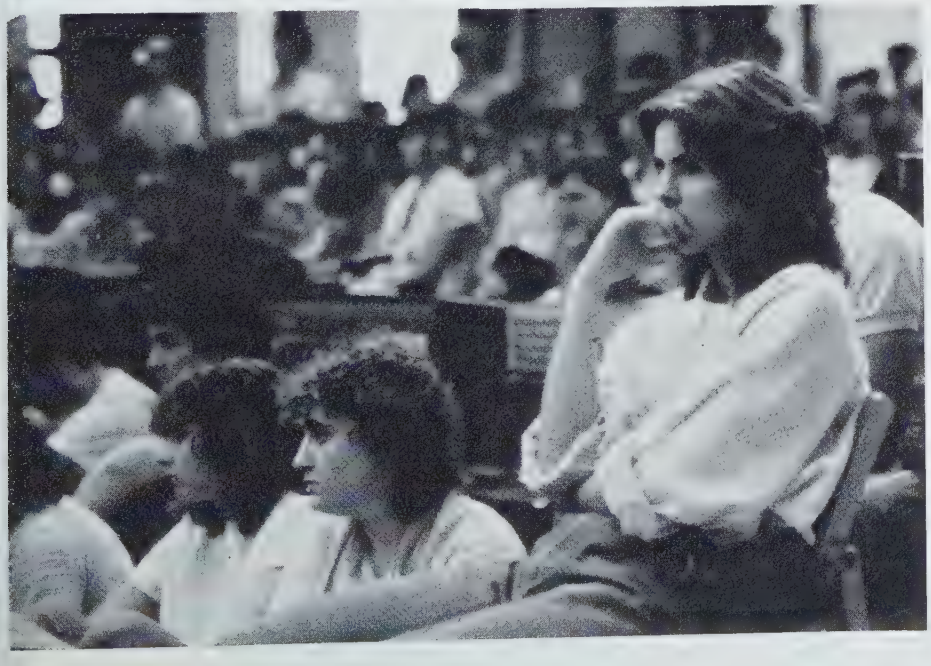
I made the rounds of all these workshops, with the appropriate "pass" around my neck. Each pass bore a different symbol according to the workshop one belonged to — a music stand for the instruments, a nightingale for the singers, a dancer for the modern dance group, a mask for the mimes, two crossed spotlight beams for lighting and stage design, a treble clef with earphones for sound technicians.

I stayed at the Vivaio which had been freshly painted for the occasion. The courtyard with its porticoed walls made an austere contrast to the lively and colorful groups of the mime workshop. Inside the convent refectory however, except for the long dining tables lined neatly against the walls, the room could easily have been mistaken for a typical off-broadway style theater. Only that here there were certain touches which gave the place a different atmosphere — like those big, colorfully-lined wicker baskets which, according to ones imagination, could be used as lampshades, as parts of a costume or of a stage set.

The members of this group came from Italy, France, and Germany, and had never met before. What united them was their mutual interest in mime, so what better way to get acquainted than to each give a short performance on stage? After which, without wasting any time, they got busy preparing something

(continued on page 10)

OPPOSITE PAGE: Moments the Gen Verde-Gen Rosso workshop held on June 25 and 26 at Loppiano, near Florence, Italy, including some scenes of the festival which all the participants prepared together.



WHY WE ARE HERE

Excerpts from the opening speech of the workshop

Let us open together one of the many boxes we shall have access to during these two days. This one is marked "Music." Music as we all know is something that cannot be suppressed; it is something which has marked the history of humanity throughout the ages. Yet there is always something to be discovered in it, even today.

But what's behind this need for music? — from the radio turned on as soon as we awake up in the morning, to the stereo-headphones we wear on the bus; from the overcrowded sports arenas whose gates are crashed by people streaming in to hear a concert, to the soundtrack of the latest film we listen to over and over again. Music means so many things. It means that my own solitude becomes filled with images and movement, boredom is changed into joy, monotony is transformed into the will to live, time seems to stop, a dream that is far becomes near.

We believe that music expresses a need which is deep within each one of us. If we were to give it a name we could say it is "a need to be happy, together." Perhaps we never thought of it this way, but it is true. Only a few years ago we demanded many things of music — identity, social revolution, individual and collective liberation. Today many of us require only one thing, simple yet essential — happiness.

Surely music can respond to this search: whether for a few, brief hours spent at a show or in a discotheque or sitting shoulder to shoulder in a sports stadium, in those moments we are all one. Music can give us a taste of the magic which transforms "I" into "We," and the joy, which is temporary perhaps, but full of intensity, full of the discovery of a new human dimension — communion among people.

Music, in a way, reveals a deeper reality: that we are made for something that will not pass. All of us here have experienced that touch of sadness when our favorite song is over or at the sight of a stadium emptying out after a concert has drawn to its inevitable end.

If music, like all the other arts, awakens this aspiration which we all carry in our hearts, maybe it provides us with the key for putting it into our everyday lives. The source of that communion among people is perhaps much closer than we think.

Luis Bellido and Anna Conte

(continued from page 8)

together. Just anything? "Sure," explained one young man, "we are here to create, to invent. Let's find out what's cooking inside our heads and take it from there." And what did his performance produce? A peal of laughter!

Yes, that's exactly what it was, an explosion of side-splitting laughter which the group later used for their grand finale. Here is the scene: dressed in the most bizarre attires, the mimes stand around listlessly in a half circle, visibly bored. Some stare into empty space, others read their newspaper, a little girl with freckles is deeply involved in contemplating her feet. In comes a clown in dress tails. He tries to attract their attention and winks at one and then at another until he finally makes friends with everyone. He invites them, one by one, to look each other in the eye, and continues moving back and forth in the semi-circle until the gloomy look on their face changes into an expression of tolerance. A hint of a smile begins to appear, then a grin, a giggle, and finally an explosion of side-splitting laughter. The audience, unable to resist ends up laughing even harder than the performers.

The music workshop is housed in a different building, very new and modern with wall to wall carpeting. There are many participants in the workshop all divided by instruments. I looked into the hall where the basses were assembled, there were about ten young people there, each with his or her own instrument. The electric instruments produced dramatic vibrations which fortunately, if you're used to it is no hardship to bear. A tape recorder nearby repeated the ticking of a metronome and a few notes of a piano — the basic motif upon which the festival finale is being built.

I stopped for a moment near the bass players as they work composing the motif upon which each of them will later improvise variations and thus demonstrate an individual style. The fact that really amazes me is not so much

ABOVE: Rehearsal in the modern dance workshop. The participants left with a deep desire to continue building unity in their different environments, schools of dance, conservatories and art academies.

the musical quality of these young players, but the dialogue that emerges between them. It is not a competition; it is an exchange, where a self-taught virtuoso like Mark can play side by side with Maria, a beginner.

To find refuge from the high decibels of the amplified instruments, another group of musicians chose to play outdoors. It consists of three violins, three trumpets, several flutes, clarinets, an oboe, and a harp. The three trumpet players wanted me to listen to the piece they had put together with the harpist — an unusual combination, but the music was good.

The festival and the workshop closed with a performance of two pieces composed by the group of instrumentalists together with an eighty-member choir which had rehearsed separately. It was a grand finale of good musical quality, bursting with vitality and joy. One doesn't see every day guitar players plucking happily on their instruments while knowing full well they couldn't be heard over the din of the orchestra. Just as one isn't usually given a chance to watch a dignified conductor lead an orchestra with his hands, arms, head, eyes, and even with his feet, while the audience, on its feet, keeps time — and all this without the least confusion. It is quite possible that the video recording of the event didn't come out too well because chances are that the cameraman, too, was clapping his hands in time with the others. And it is also possible that, in the end, some of the instruments were "done in" by over exertion. But it was worth it.

This great collective feast was the conclusion of two days of working together. Everybody went on stage, each with his or her particular workshop, each contributing with a performance of some kind or at least with a talk about what they had done; the sound people explained about frequencies and other electronic problems, and those in charge of lighting and stage setting were also involved with the show put on by the dance workshop.

All different people, with a common interest in some aspect of entertainment. "Some of us already know each other a little bit", said Anna and Luis in their opening speech. "Many of you have come to our shows or heard our records. But from your letters and impressions after these evenings, we realized that there was a need to get better acquainted and also to do something together. So, if this is an occasion for celebration, which it certainly is, it is also a time for work, for dialogue, for an exchange of ideas and of experiences. Let this, then, be our point of departure, our mutual understanding to go ahead together along the guidelines of music, of art, of life."

There were believers and non-believers, people of different cultures, of different tastes and talents, people to whom the world of dance or of music had become the opportunity to live a rather uncommon, new experi-

ence. New, not so much because of their wish to do something together, but because they wanted to do it without taking advantage of one another, without trying to outdo one another, without self interest. Otherwise it would be hard to explain the presence of skilled professionals and complete greenhorns in the same company.

The purpose of the organizers, as further described in our insert, was to have these artists live together and experience two days of "communion among people." It is a big word, but "communion," as Luis of the Gen Rosso put it, "is made of many different moments of sharing, of music making, of listening, of a continuous actor-spectator exchange. When we do it this way, we may even reach communion."

One of the impressions I came away with was eloquently expressed by Pamela of the mime group when she said: "It won't be possible for me to act tomorrow as though all of this hadn't happened, as though I hadn't come here and donated at least something of myself to the others and received something from them in return. I felt that working together like this could, in a way, become a new way of life. I don't want this strong experience to fade into an old picture postcard, into a nostalgic souvenir." There will be other workshops, other occasions to meet and work together. There will be new initiatives which have to mature, like a new magazine already in

FLASH INTERVIEWS

"During these two days there will be the opportunity for Gen Rosso and Gen Verde to *open up* their act," announced Anna, a Gen Verde soloist, at the opening of the workshop. In fact, that's exactly what happened. The first session began with their figuratively turning the pages of the history of these two musical ensembles by means of a series of slides: seventeen years filled with life and experiences from each member's personal encounter with a new lifestyle, to the choice of venturing even further — of packing suitcases and leaving home to go to Loppiano, a little city which was just being born and which needed strong arms to build it. They recounted events from the first experiences of composing songs during the evening in the old farmhouses, to the first shows, to the artistic and historical development of the two ensembles, to their tours throughout the world.

Anna continued, "But one thing has remained unchanged throughout the years: our strongest desire is that our music remain true to its origins, to the idea that called each of us here to Loppiano — to bring about the realization of a united world. Essentially, our distinctive characteristic, the reason behind our giving performances, is this ideal of unity. We live it among ourselves first of all as a means of building a new world."

Living for a united world could seem like a utopia, but the members of the workshop began at once to try it out in that collective experiment which would consist of creating, dancing, making music and mime together.

Hidden and imperceptible though it was, a certain "law" seemed to regulate the interactions of each team. There was a thrust toward mutual helping, toward listening and being open to one another's ideas; there was the effort of making room for one another, of really trying to experience together a communion of language and expression.

"In the beginning," confided a young Spaniard, "everybody was speaking Italian and I didn't understand what was going on so I stayed mostly with the other people of my group; but then, little by

RIGHT: Three trumpet players composed a piece of music for trumpet and harp.
FAR RIGHT: A scene from the skit made in the mime workshop.

The participants share impressions and reflections.

little, it seemed like words weren't so important after all: we could communicate with one another using the language of Love. This workshop taught me, enabled me, to experience the strength of this language. It can be used anywhere, with anyone, in any situation."

Another seventeen-year-old youth said, "Here I found brotherly love, something I hadn't expected to find, because in my city, for example, everyone minds their own business and goes their own way; instead, here I have seen what it means to *love one another* ..."

A young songstress shared, "I am returning home with the discovery I have made in these two days — that I must put my gift at the service of others; and then it is true as they said yesterday in the hall, it is really in the moment of suffering that you discover the beauty of life; suffering transformed into love — this is what I want to do with art."

So many small achievements were made: an instrument of great value was lent unselfishly; the arrangement of a dance piece became a joint effort; the text of a song was agreed upon. Looking at things closely, these were all great accomplishments since they succeeded in breaking with the artist's "traditional" tendency toward isolation and individualism, especially during moments of creativity.

"We were six or seven in my group working on composing a song," said eighteen-year-old Enrico. "I was absolutely convinced that nothing would come out and instead, we made it! This means it is not impossible to work together. If I had to tell one of my friends what these two days have been for me, I would have to say that finally I have found a place where people help one another, where envy is put aside so that we can work together at making the world around us a better place."

Another young man spoke up, "This whole experience, the moments of heat and tiredness, the outbursts of laughter and joy, everything together has moved me spiritually. I had always heard about unity, brotherhood, but I had never directly experienced it. Now I feel that the world and life in general are beginning to mean something to me...."

the planning stage — the fond wish for all the 400 participants.

It has been said that this new interest on the part of the youth for music is a sign of weariness, of rejection, and of escape from the political and social realities of our day. Maybe so, but mixing with these young people, I certainly didn't have this impression. I sensed instead the emergence of a current of thought and action toward peace, so many symptoms of it are felt in our societies. Many of these musicians, dancers, or technicians have been developing something along these lines for some time. Like Franz and Michele, for instance, with their "Compagnia Cantautori" (Company of Singer—composers) or Maria and her "Halleluja" group; like Paolo and his "Friends of Chamber Music," Carmine and his newsletter "Rendez-Vous."

Anna was right when she concluded the workshop by saying with determination, "The joy that now unites us means that something has come to life among us — an understanding that enables us to discover the individual, irreplaceable note of each person. Sometimes my instrument must be silent in order to act as a background, or accompaniment to the other, so that a concert may emerge. Together we have composed a few notes, perhaps even a few chords, of that fascinating symphony which is called unity." □

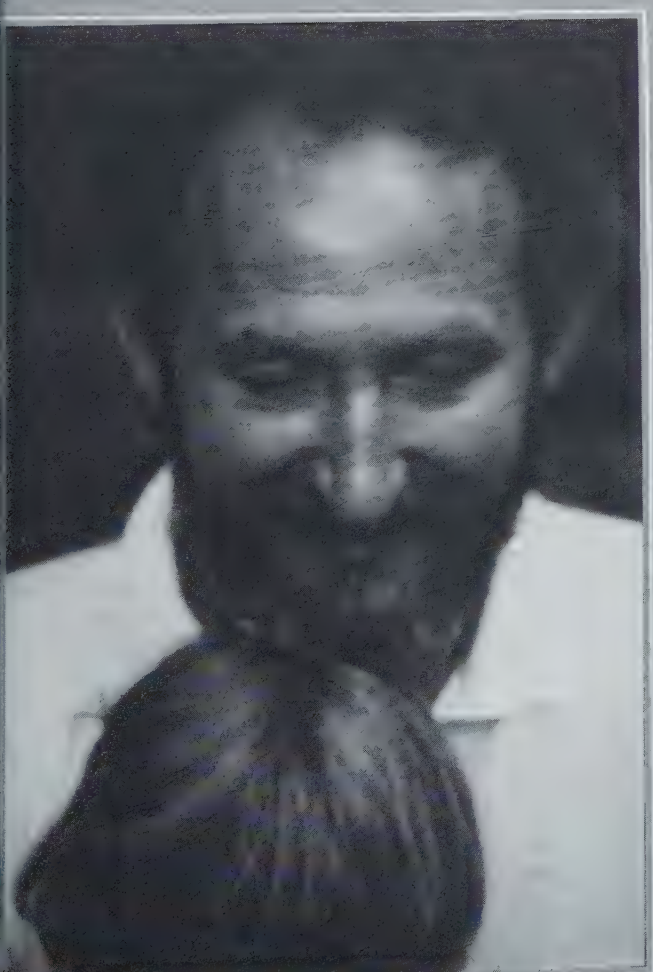
1) A small city built by the Focolare Movement near Florence, Italy. It embodies a concrete expression of a society founded on the Gospel. Its inhabitants live according to the spirituality of the Focolare Movement.

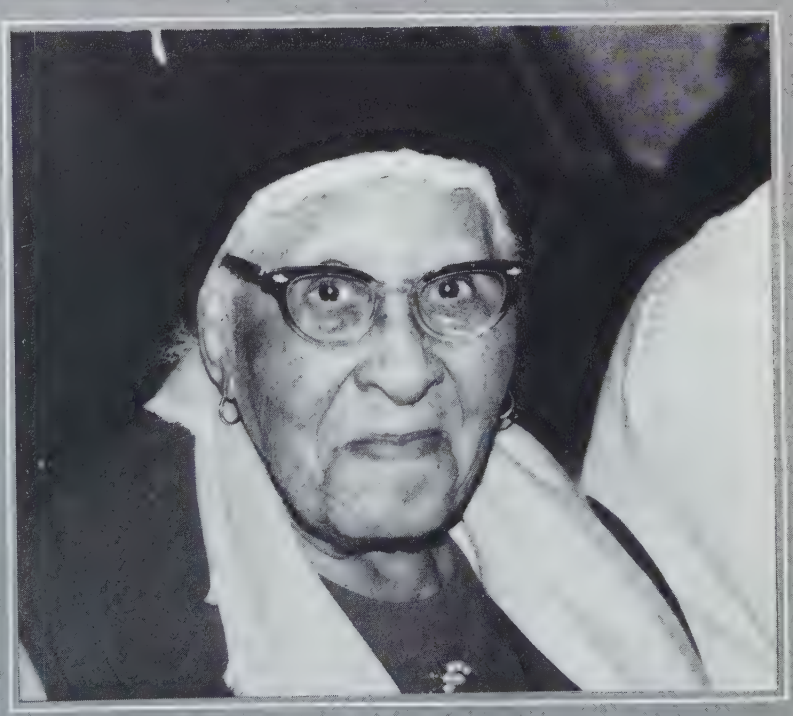
2) Gen Verde and Gen Rosso are two musical groups, two of the many expressions of the Focolare Movement.

CHRISTMAS '83

Those who love are filled with joy.
And this is as it should be
because those who love
are children of God who is love,
of God who is happiness.

Chiara Lubich





A CASTLE CHANGES IDENTITY

Baak House, originally a medieval castle, turned into a new Center of the Focolare Movement in Holland.

In the manificent park of Baak House, where forbidding walls with pointed cannons once stood as a warning to enemies, a festive crowd is strolling about to celebrate a new victory of love. The day is September 24, 1983, the place Hilversum, not far from Amsterdam, and the occasion is the inauguration of a new ecumenical center of formation and for gatherings of the Focolare Movement in the Netherlands.

It had taken three years of hard work to complete the necessary overhaul of Baak House, and members and friends of the Focolare, young and old, entire families, came to help install heating plants, fill in cracks in the ceiling, paint window frames, tear off old wallpaper. One of them, Piet, broke every family tradition by selling his ancestors' farm to come to work here with his family.

These Dutch people have made a radical choice of God, as best expressed by Ad van Haandel when he said: "I want to be a living stone so that, together with many others, we may build a living home for Jesus in our midst and thus bring God-Love into the world".

This new center, called Mariapoli Centrum "Mater Dulcis" is due in great part to the active and loving cooperation of Cardinal John Willebrands, who opened the inauguration ceremonies with reminiscences of how he met Chiara Lubich back in the sixties and had kept in touch with her through the ecumenical movement headed by the late Cardinal Bea.

"In those years," he said, "as I attended various meetings for Anglicans, Orthodox and Lutherans at the Mariapolis Center of Rocca di Papa, I could see how much the Focolare was contributing to ecumenism, and not only because of these meetings with Christians of other dominations, but also because the very essence of the Focolare spirituality, rising from the heart of the Movement, gives a significant contribution to the unity of all Christians.

"What first struck me as ecumenically meaningful," the Cardinal continued, "was the possibility that, though a Catholic Movement, the Focolare Movement would also have Christians of other Churches in it, and that this spirit of being one family in Christ could exist among all those who, having been reborn through baptism to a new life in Christ, have truly become brothers and sisters. The relevance of baptism has indeed been one of the great theses and points which Cardinal Bea had always upheld during the Vatican Council."

Against the background of the present world crisis, Cardinal Willebrands reminded those present that it was exactly during the last World War that the idea of the Focolare Movement was born in Trent in the person of Chiara Lubich, as a divine inspiration to counteract war and hatred. It was like a visible sign of love raised high against all hostility that the Focolare Movement grew and developed and spread over the entire globe.

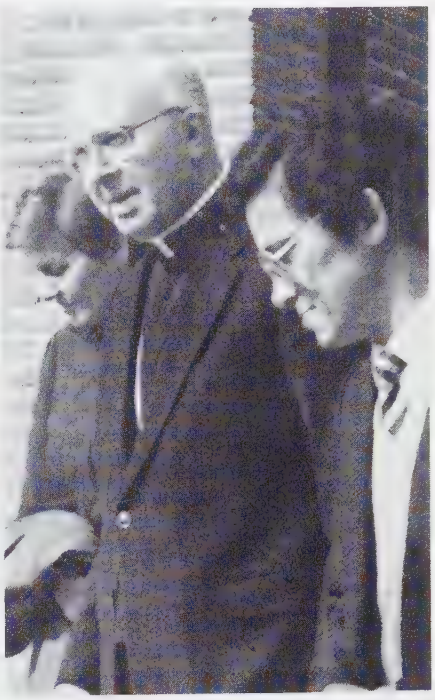
The Cardinal also pointed to the deep significance of the Focolare (hearth) as a symbol of the family, which is the first project in God's creation. The greatest crisis of our society today lies in the threat undermining the original concept of the family. If the family disintegrates, no matter how many other alternative forms may be thought up to replace it, the very existence of humanity is threatened because its most solid foundation, love, is smashed to pieces. This is why I feel that the Focolare Movement has caught, and, in a way, put its finger on the roots of the crisis of our day and has, at the same time, found the answer to solve it."

After his talk Cardinal Willebrands offered the Eucharist in concelebration with many other priests, Archbishop Simonis among them.

There were 2500 people present, at Hilversum, the following day to celebrate the progress the Focolare Movement of Holland has made in the twenty years or so, since it began to make its way among student circles at the University of Nimega. Now it includes young people and adults, lay people and priests, as well as religious from various cities. Some gave talks, others contributed with songs and music, but everyone present was a protagonist. The experiences, witnessing the power of the Gospel put into practice in our everyday difficulties and in the concrete service of our neighbor presented the best commentary to the talk of Chiara Lubich which was read at the opening of the day.

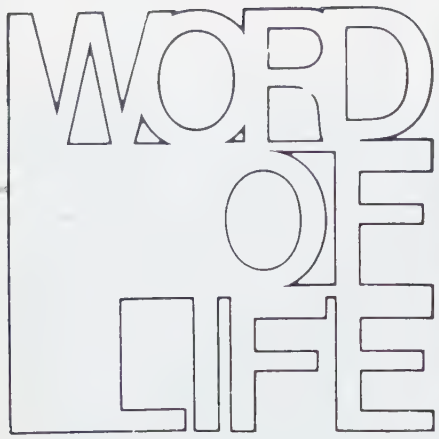
Old and new friends of the Movement in the Netherlands were present, among them the young people just back from the International School in Loppiano, who are now sharing the responsibility of the spiritual revival of the community around them. A very important characteristic of the Movement in Holland is that it includes not only Catholics among its members but many of the Reformed Church as well.

Those who are familiar with the history of this land know about its religious strifes of the past, and its present difficulties. Yet, as we have seen at last year's Katholikentag in Germany, here, too, there are Christians who have decided to put mutual love before everything else that still separates them, so that they may contribute to unity. They are convinced that where there is love and charity there is God. This is one of the strong messages one takes home from encounters like these. □



September 24, 1983: Cardinal Willebrands came for the inauguration of the Mariapolis Center. At left in the photo is Grace De Luca one of the directors of the Focolare Movement. She had come from Rome to represent Chiara Lubich.

September 25: A moment of the Focolare Fest which offered a presentation of the Movement's spirituality and present-day activities in Holland.



"If you are repentant,
produce
the appropriate fruit."
(Mt. 3:8)

The word makes us live.

The word makes us free.

The word guarantees happiness.

The word converts.

The word purifies us.

The word draws us to our specific vocations.

The word brings forth the hatred of the world and the sanctity of the disciple.

The word makes us see the truth.

The word brings comfort.

The word gives us joy.

The word produces works.

The word gives wisdom.

The word preserves us from human concerns.

The word obtains everything.

The word brings about union with God.

The word gives us hope of eternal life.

The word makes us one.

The word changes one's mentality.

The word makes each soul a heaven.

"If you are repentant, produce the appropriate fruit"

John the Baptist had been sent by God to prepare the people of Israel for the coming of the Messiah. In his fiery preaching along the banks of the Jordan, he insisted on the need for conversion.

He administered baptism as a sign of the conversion to the new life which should prepare Israel to go out to meet the Messiah. Many people went to John to hear his words and receive his baptism. Among them there were those who belonged to the sects of the Pharisees and Sadducees. They considered themselves to be above reproach and therefore not in need of conversion because they belonged to the chosen people and were perfect observers of the external practices prescribed by the Mosaic Law. They had, however, overlooked its spirit.

With them John was particularly strong: "Brood of vipers," he admonished them, "who warned you to fly from the retribution that is coming? But if you are repentant, produce the appropriate fruit" (Mt. 3:7-8).

"If you are repentant, produce the appropriate fruit."

These words mean that proof of one's repentance should be given with facts.

The repentance called for by John the Baptist, and immediately afterwards by Jesus, is a complete turnabout in our way of living, a full 180 degree turn. It means giving God and not our own ego or earthly things the first place in our lives. It means making his word the guideline of all our thoughts and actions.

Those Pharisees and Sadducees had not given God his rightful place, often misinterpreting what he really demanded of them. This was their great error. For example, they attached more importance to the external practices surrounding their religion (ritual ablutions, offering of sacrifices in the temple, strict observance of rest on the Sabbath) than to what God wants and, above all, to the love and service of neighbor. Jesus would later underline even more clearly that love of neighbor constitutes God's will in a special way.

'If you are repentant, produce the appropriate fruit."

We need to give God his rightful place, to have him at the center of our lives.

In our times, unfortunately, there is a tendency to ignore God because what he requires of us is onsidered by many too demanding and inconvenient. Pressured by different influences, many try to avoid him or simply eliminate him from their lives as if his existence

were irrelevant, and he himself of no possible use to them. This attitude is oftentimes reinforced by a certain way of thinking which on the basis of scientific progress tends to affirm that the discoveries of science and technology will evermore enable people to resolve all problems and conquer the universe on their own. They thus consider themselves self sufficient, and this is their great error.

To repent, therefore, for many people will mean to accept in their lives, or to accept anew, the presence of God, without whom human beings cannot find their true meaning.

"If you are repentant, produce the appropriate fruit."

Another group of people who try to avoid God are those who believe in him but ignore or refuse to face what this belief concretely implies.

We Christians, too, in fact, are often like those Pharisees and Sadducees against whom John the Baptist lashed out. So many times our Christianity is based more on traditions and a sprinkling of religious education than on a deep personal conviction and a life with God at its center. Often our Christianity is reduced to mere customs and external practices without a commitment to a life based on God's commandments especially love of neighbor.

How can we then say that we give God his rightful place in our lives?

"If you are repentant, produce the appropriate fruit."

In order to put this word of life into practice we need to sincerely question ourselves as to where we stand in our relationship with Jesus.

Some who have excluded him from their lives will have to welcome him back with love. Others will feel the need to take his demands into more serious consideration. For still others, who are already on the right track, it will mean renewing the effort of giving God the first place in their lives. What matters is that we all convert and strive to "re-convert" every day of our lives.

One thing is certain. Only Jesus can heal the wounds of our society. He is asking us, his disciples, to let him live in us. Baptism gave us his life, but our response must be much more decided. The Gospel, with all that it demands, cannot be lived just in any way, it cannot be watered down.

If we live this word of life as we are called to, we will experience its transforming power. There is therefore only one thing to be done: to repent and prove it with facts.

Chiara Lubich

EXPERIENCES

CASTING STONES

My son returned from his baby-sitting job greatly agitated. "How can she pay me so little?" he exclaimed. "Four years ago she paid me more than this. I did a good job baby-sitting for the two boys. I worked hard." Our son has baby-sat, mowed the grass, raked leaves and even washed the car for our neighbor since he was in seventh grade. Her family has prospered financially, acquiring a new car, taking various trips to foreign countries, etc. Sometimes it has seemed that the only area of austerity has been in keeping costs low by reducing payments to baby-sitters, at least this was the thought that came to my mind.

My son's agitation had spread to me. Our son Joe wanted to call her and ask her why his pay was so low that day. I decided not to stop him. His question was just. She told him he could come over (it was raining very hard), and she would give him an extra dollar. Joe decided not to go.

I was surprised at how this incident hurt me. I felt as if I had been insulted in some way. I remembered helping to mop up my neighbor's basement floor when the water pipe broke, while she waited for the plumber. I remembered the times I had watched one of her children for a short time when she needed someone. I remembered the conversations and lunches in each other's

homes. Was all of this less important to her than saving a few pennies on the hourly wage she paid her baby-sitter? Was money, in the end, the basis of our relationship? I didn't want my thoughts to affect my son, or anyone else. For me this injustice was an aspect of Jesus' suffering on the cross. With my will I embraced this suffering and went ahead preparing dinner.

The next morning I picked up a copy of the word of life for the month, reading: "If there is one of you who has not sinned, let him be the first to throw a stone" (Jn. 8:7). As I read the commentary I realized how many stones I had been casting at my neighbor. As I meditated, I was able to open my heart again to this neighbor. I felt like immediately going to visit her in order to re-establish a relationship which I had broken, at least in my thoughts and judgments. Certainly I was not "without sin." Who was I to judge her?

A few days later I took something over to my neighbor. I tried to love her by listening to her as she described her son's difficulties in school. Special conferences and placements in special classes were involved and she was quite concerned that everything turn out all right. A couple of days later she called me with the good news that her son's difficulties were less serious than she had thought and that probably soon he would be doing fine work in school.

I felt such a joy at that moment as she shared her joy with me, not only for her news, but also because of the gratitude I felt for the words of Jesus. If I had not lived them, there might have been a sense of righteous indignation in my heart. I certainly preferred the joy that came from living his words and the additional joy of having built a greater unity with my neighbor.

M. B.

RETURNING GOOD

I work as a welder. I've worked for about three years now with a man whose name is John. For some reason he doesn't seem to like me no matter how nice I try to be to him. He's very obvious about it, too — he comes to see the work I'm doing and he'll call his buddies over and they'll come and laugh. And the only way that I've been able to handle this situation is to laugh too and just kind of make a joke out of it, but he really makes it hard for me to like him, much less try and love him.

At times, I really get kind of down and I think that nothing is going to change. But what makes me continue to try and love this man is the realization that Jesus is in him. This keeps me from returning bad for all the bad he gives me.

At work we use these portable welding machines that are on wheels and we can pull them around. I got to using one of them one day and at a certain point I went away to get something. When I came back, it was gone and my tool box was on the floor. Someone had used it and had written on it in chalk. "For sale: 25 cents." And it was John's handwriting. Right away I had to laugh because it was funny. It was like a note from him, like he was trying to establish a relationship with me through this little note. I felt good about it because I realized that my small efforts to love had reached him. It was a confirmation for me not to make judgments as I had done in the past.

M. C.

HELPING ONE ANOTHER TO GROW

One night, a few days after my forty-fifth birthday, I was preparing dinner, when George, my husband, returned home. He was excitedly waving a piece of paper at me. That paper contained the results of my pregnancy test. I was expecting a baby! This news caught me off guard. After the birth of our son Paul twenty years before, we had waited unsuccessfully for this moment. Now, after so many years, the news was coming to us like a bolt out of the blue.

At present we had few family commitments, our schedules were quite flexible — with many outside activities. The presence of a child would totally change our life.

My unstable health and my age were also a concern. George told me, "Just think, when our child will be twenty, we'll be almost seventy years old!" Then he shared his worries about the risks of this pregnancy. These were things we certainly could not overlook.

As the days passed, many questions came to our mind. How will it go? What will happen? What will we do? They were unanswered questions which caused some anxiety.

The first months were long and difficult; we were still full of awe. Even the doctor was concerned and gave me many check-ups. Although I didn't share these thoughts with anyone, I was really quite scared.

Just at the right moment, however, someone reminded me of a sentence of the Gospel that put

me at peace: "I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say" (Lk. 1:38). I could relate to Mary very well. She, too, had realistically wondered how her baby's birth could take place, yet she welcomed the announcement. Even though there were doubts about this difficult pregnancy, George and I were now at peace. We were certain that this child was an expression of God's love for all of us.

The long-awaited moment finally came. The doctor had wanted me in the hospital beforehand so he could keep a close check on the situation. George was attentive to my every need. I had never felt so close to him before. Paul was worried and excited at the same time. I was calm and detached from myself, without worrying anymore about what the future would bring.

A Caesarean section was required and as they wheeled me to the operating room, I tried to live each moment as if eternity depended on it. The doctor told me with a smile, "Since this baby doesn't want to be born, we'll just give it a hand." His kindness and dedication put us at ease. I was aware of being a conscious and active instrument in giving life to a new human being, and with this thought I fell asleep.

I woke up to a voice telling me, "Look, you have a beautiful baby girl." Was this a dream? I realized that for months I hadn't fully believed it was possible that Christina would be born. George shared with me his joy as well as the same feeling of awe for this birth which seemed to be a miracle.

Now we understood the reasons for the suffering during the early months. It had helped us reach a new maturity as parents. We became more aware of the truth that our children are entrusted to us, but their lives don't belong to us. In fact, if we had had a second child a few years before when we wanted it so much, we would have felt as if it had been almost exclusively ours. Now it was totally different.

Our friends tell us we now look younger, and maybe they're right. Even though we are often tired (we don't have the strength we had when we were twenty), Christina's liveliness keeps us spiritually young. We play and laugh together, helping one another to grow ... for as long as God wants.

P. C.

FROM THE INSIDE

I never really got to know my brother Robert as he was always in trouble with the police and seldom at home. Besides, he was a lot older than me and even if there had been more time to spend together, we seemed to have very little in common.

Some of my friends received the word of life and as I grew closer to them, I also began to try to apply the Gospel values to my own personal life.

Robert had served four years of his sentence when it dawned on me that living the word of life had something to do with my brother in prison.

The word of life said: "For the weak I made myself weak. I made myself all things to all men in order to save some at any cost" (1 Cor. 9:22).

I knew I really wanted to love my brother but what could I do practically? Robert had given up on God many years ago and I knew that the last thing he would want would be a letter full of my newly found happiness and adventures in living the word of life.

I wanted to find a relationship with him but it had to be on his terms and not on mine.

Two years of letterwriting followed — letters about music which interested him, letters full of jokes to make him laugh and ease the monotony. In those two years, I never got a single reply. The one letter Robert was allowed to write per week, he always sent to my parents, I knew I should never expect anything in return if I only wanted to love.

Yet one day a letter did arrive, full of thanks and inviting me to visit him in prison, and I did.

During the years of letterwriting and then visiting, we both grew a lot. Sometimes on my visits, Robert gave me advice for my studies and also useful books. Bit by bit, our relationship became a relationship of equals and the love I gave returned to me.

When my father died last year, it was a sad and difficult time for all of us and particularly so for Robert. His pain stemmed from the fact that he had never had the chance to repay my dad for all the love he had received from him. I knew that now more than ever, my love for Robert had to be even stronger to help him through and I went as often as possible to visit him in prison.

Shortly after that event, Robert wrote me a letter asking me to tell him more about myself and my friends "on whose faces, I have seen something I have never seen anywhere else."

It was just three years since the day I had first decided to write to Robert. We were now close friends. I wrote and told him about God at the center of my life and about trying to live the Gospel at home and with my friends.

In his reply, Robert said that my letter had been the most encouraging he had received while in prison. In particular, he felt he could identify with the experience of Chiara Lubich and her companions whose discovery that God was Love was made when everything had crumbled for them, because in his life also, everything had crumbled.

Then Robert began to live the word of life with his friends in the prison Bible study group. Three evenings a week, a group of fifteen to twenty prisoners and eight outsiders meet together for study or just to share thoughts on putting the Gospel into practice.

In a letter to a friend Robert wrote: "Last week we had the opportunity to study and discuss the word of life: 'And if your foot should cause you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life lame, than to have two feet and be thrown into Gehenna' (Mk. 9:45). No doubt you will appreciate how much it applied to our little group. We, more than most, are faced with no alternative but to 'cut' from our lives so many things which could destroy our newfound faith ... I can only say we all look forward to many future words of life."

There may yet be a lot to go through but my relationship with Robert is completely different now. I have rediscovered my brother and it is something special because it is rooted in God.

V. L.

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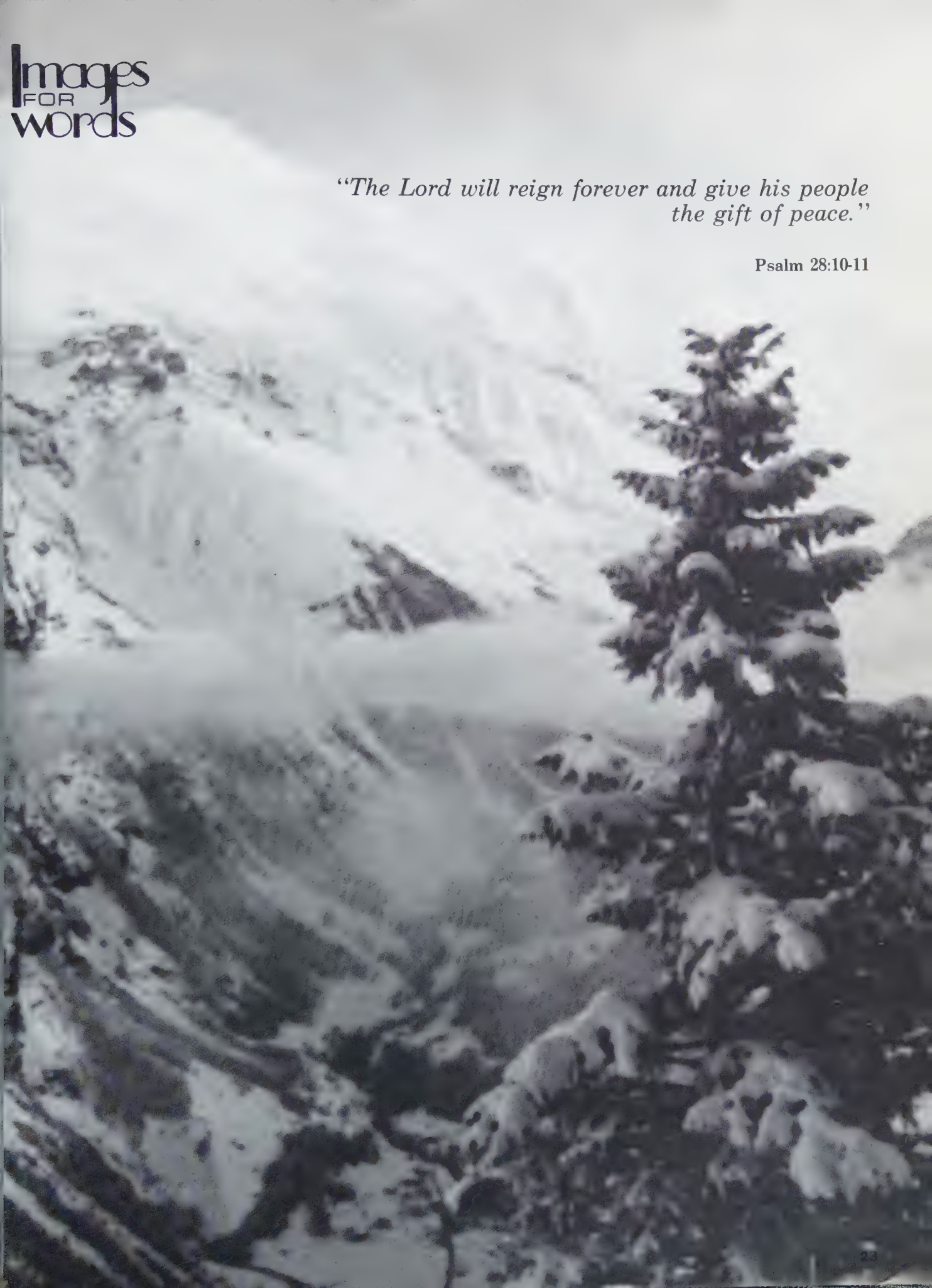
Images FOR words

"The Lord will reign forever and give his people the gift of peace."

Psalm 28:10-11



FAMILY LIFE

Weakened family life is one of the greatest social ills of our time.
The "New Family" Movement has as its aim to bring the Focolare spirit of unity into family life, so that each family will be deeply united within itself and with other families.

THE GIRL FROM THE NORTH

It was the beginning of September and the weather was particularly cold that year. So it was nice to be home on a Sunday evening, eating sweet fritters with some of our friends. The phone rang. It was Patrice. "Monique," she said, "Michel met a young woman on the subway. She left her husband and her two small children this morning after a violent argument, and now she is wandering around Paris without knowing where to go. What should we do?"

With my husband Pierre, we had decided some time ago that the door of our home would always be open for emergencies like this one, so I simply said, "She can come here with us."

Half an hour later, after some other friends had arrived to prepare the program for a prayer vigil our group was putting on, the doorbell rang. Michel and the young woman, Nicole, were at the door. She looked lost and afraid and said, "I don't want to come in ... I have to go. I can't come in. I have to kill myself... My husband will never take me back after what happened this morning."

She was desperate and confused. Pierre and I did finally persuaded her to come in, at least for a few minutes, just long enough to have something warm to eat. After a while she sat on the edge of the chair and began eating some warm soup. She kept her coat on. Little by little she started to talk. I realized that she loved her children and, after all, her husband too. She only complained that he was always out and that, instead of returning home after work, he stopped at the bar. It was evident however that she was not telling everything and that there were still other reasons for her desperation. It had been three years since her mother had died; she felt terribly alone.

While listening to all this, I thought to myself, "What will we do now? Tell her to go back home?" Obviously she did not have either the courage or the strength to do that. Little by little an idea became clear in my mind and suddenly I said to her, "If you want me to, tomorrow I can take you home in the car." She just answered, "Thank you" and seemed relieved.

That was easily said but then I realized that I did not even know where she lived, or whether it would be safe to drive the next day because of the snow on the ground, or, even more important, whether my husband would be willing to let me risk going. I felt like I had walked into a dark tunnel with too little courage to get me through to the end of it . . but I put all my trust in the Almighty, and everything seemed to fall into place. My husband was in the other room working with some friends to prepare the program. He agreed that I could drive Nicole the next morning after she had rested and regained a little confidence and strength. Our youngest daughter could stay at school for lunch and, fortunately, I learned that Nicole lived only two and a half hours away and the roads were not icy in spite of the snow that covered everything like a white blanket.

During the trip Nicole asked many questions. I tried to explain to her that the different situations of our family life were often transformed by the love we tried to put into everything we did. As we approached her home Nicole became increasingly nervous. She was visibly afraid and shaking.

There was no welcome for her when we arrived. Her husband Jean-Jacques was furious. The apartment was in shambles; the children, undressed and incredibly dirty, hid themselves in the corner. I tried as best I could to overcome the shock, and little by little the tension subsided. I started to leave but Jean-Jacques said, "Why don't you stay and have some lunch with us?" I left a couple of hours later, only after seeing a smile on the faces of the children and their mother. I really did not want to leave them there

in that *inferno*. I told myself on the way home, "We need someone who could help them rediscover themselves and realize that they still love one another after all."

When I got home I picked up the phone and started asking some friends if they knew anyone who lived in Nicole's area. "Yes," came an answer, "there is Helen, but she lives forty miles away and her husband is dying of cancer." I don't know why but something urged me to call her anyway. I told her the whole story and from the other end came an unexpected answer: "I'll go." Even with many personal sufferings she was able to make room for the needs and problems of others.

She visited Nicole who in the meantime had been hospitalized for bronchitis and extreme fatigue. She also met Jean-Jacques and had an open and frank talk with him about the family situation. Then she visited his mother who had been very distrustful of her daughter-in-law, particularly after she had fled to Paris that night. She would not believe that there could be a positive solution to all their family problems.

In spite of all this, the news that I received from Helen later on was very encouraging. She wrote to me, "No one can believe what is happening in this family. The grandparents are reunited with their children and Nicole and Jean-Jacques are discovering a new relationship with one another and are opening up to many other people around them. Of course, they still have many needs, but I'm sure that if God permitted us to meet this family, he will continue to help us discover what else needs to be done for them. Right now they need money to pay the rent which is several months in arrears. They have to come up with $926.64 by the first of next month and another $165 for legal expenses. Otherwise they will be evicted from their apartment."

It was an great amount of money to raise in a month, but acting on faith we started immediately. After two weeks however we only had $55. I still remember that Sunday at Mass. I prayed to Jesus: "I really need this money for Nicole and Jean-Jacques. I am one with them and I feel like their debt is my debt." That very day we received $330, and then large and small amounts of money continued to arrive. In a way, all the donations were big because each one was an expression of great love. For instance, there was the money we received from the family whose father had just gone back to work after being laid-off for some time; there was the money from the blind couple and from others we barely knew, from elderly people living in a retirement home and from our daughter who offered the contents of her piggy bank. By the end of the month the entire sum was there.

Two days earlier though Helen's husband died. He had wanted to follow every step of the story's development up to the end. Now we felt like he was our protector. His funeral, with a beautiful Mass, was like a celebration — the celebration of his arrival in heaven.

On our way home, my husband and I stopped to visit Jean-Jacques and Nicole. The house was clean and orderly; I didn't even recognize it. The children were neatly dressed and smiling; Nicole was radiant. We also stopped by to see Jean-Jacques' parents who told us, "We can't believe our eyes. What a change! You usually read in the newspapers only about all the bad things that happen . . ."

Today, one month later, I spoke on the phone with Jean-Jacques' mother: "Yes, everything is fine. Nicole and Jean-Jacques are happy together. Now he's no longer interested in drinking at the bar. And you should see the house and the children. . . ."

M. B.

"In The Palm of your Hand ..."

The suffering of a young terminally-ill patient undergoes an unexpected transformation.

The chemotheraphy clinic was more active than usual that day, but I couldn't mistake that tough, obstinate face for anyone but Brian. His expression and abusive language fit his reputation, well known to the clinic staff. His large almost "healthy looking" frame, topped with a crop of bright red hair, reminded me of the typical nineteen-year-old college footbal player.

A well-meaning colleague whispered, "Watch out ... he's tough to handle" and I felt an immediate apprehension about how our first introduction would go.

Brian showed no reservations in relating me his history and in it I understood the reason for his anger. He had been having abdominal pain for some time and had consulted numerous doctors. Nothing was found and he was repeatedly sent away with: "Don't worry, you're just fine; look how robust you are!"

Brian had begun to think it was all in his head. The pains continued, however, and so did the visits to doctors. Finally, one doctor was able to make the diagnosis: cancer, with metastasis to the brain and various other organs. He was furious and felt helplessly doomed to a tragic fate.

In a room filled with children, all waiting for cancer treatments and as a nurse who has to deal with this daily, Brian's question, "How can you stand working here?" didn't surprise me. I felt it was better to answer him honestly so I shared with him that what sustained me was my belief in love. Brian was curious to know what kind of love I was speaking of. I felt that I could tell him that it was the love of God, that Love that I had experienced in my own life. At that moment Brian's mother arrived and I was almost grateful; to have said more would have already been too much.

Weeks went by and Brian's condition worsened, compelling him to come to the clinic daily. His behavior was becoming always more impossible to handle and a psychiatric consultation was done with little results.

It was at this point that the head nurse called me into her office. It seemed that I was the only one who could handle Brian and she wanted me to become his primary nurse. The task seemed almost overwhelming until I remembered that in Brian I could find and love the countenance of Jesus Crucified and Forsaken.[1] In Him I could find an answer to Brian's anguish; to his unanswered "why" which caused him to lash out at everything and everyone. I felt his suffering profoundly. How would have I reacted in his place ... worse perhaps?

At times Brian suffered from acute head pains causing his behavior to become very agitated. Knowing that if I didn't act quickly there would be another disaster, I suggested we go into the conference room for a few minutes. I had a feeling that the head pains were starting again; when I asked him, he confirmed my intuition. Brian refused all pain medication because he was afraid of becoming addicted. When I explained that it would help him control him-

self better, he became convinced that it served a good purpose.

Brian had great feelings of remorse for his behavior that put him in constant conflict with the hospital staff. He was eager to find a solution but didn't feel the psychiatrist's advice "to let his anger out!" was the answer. He preferred my suggestion to avoid acting out in front of others by going to his room as soon as he felt an attack coming on. This, among other things, told me that there was a certain sense of maturity in Brian brought about by his constant suffering. I shared with him that as a consequence of this he was able to understand many things more deeply than others. He looked at me with grateful eyes; almost to say "thank God someone doesn't think I'm crazy!"

All of us on the staff had been guilty of putting Brian in a hole, looking down at him insisting that he come up. I realized I couldn't ask this of him; I had to go down to him and help him up. Within me a question kept coming up — "How?" until I began little by little to receive a confirmation that God's love was reaching Brian.

Due to serious complications, he was hospitalized. My contact with him was always more frequent leading to a profound rapport. One day he proudly showed me a bible that he had gotten from the hospital library. He had begun to read it and commented one day, "You know sometimes I feel a lot like Job ..." In his own way, Brian was trying to say his "yes" to God.

Brian was anxious to know how I could continue to smile in the face of so much suffering. "It's not easy," I told him, "but it's possible because I believe in the love of God and I know that If I put myself aside I can be a small expression of his joy and love to those near me." He wanted to know more when I shared with him how I tried to change every suffering into Love. Although he was Jewish, with great care not to offend him, I began to speak about Jesus Crucified and Forsaken. He was fascinated to think that "Someone" had loved us so much as to give up his life for us and agreed immediately that there was no love greater than this.

"I think God asks only special people to suffer as you are suffering, Brian — the ones he loves the most...."

After a few minutes of silence he said, "I'm really going to try this, I want to be close to God, and when I get better...." He hesitated a minute, "But what if I don't make it, and I die?" It was difficult for me to answer, but I knew I had to be honest; "Then you'll see him face-to-face." I had the impression he knew this was the truth.

As time went on, Brian's condition worsened; he could hardly hold a conversation. My friends at home were following his experience with me and in unity we continued to pray that he could be touched by the love of God. Several of them had begun to visit the hospital frequently bringing Jesus' presence, alive among two or more united in His name,[2] to the patients. It was my greatest desire to have Brian enjoy one of these visits and experience that atmosphere of mutual love.

His increasing weakness made him reluctant to have visitors. The day my friends came Brian was quite sick; I knew I had to be ready to lose my plan. To my surprise, however, when I mentioned to him that my friends were outside and would like to sing a song for him, he asked for them to come in.

The words of their song were taken from Isaiah, and said:

There's pain and joy in our life.
At times it's hard to find our path.
We fight and lose and feel alone,
For we don't see.
And you say: I forget you not.
I carved you in the palm of my hand.
Before my eyes you'll always be;
I'll never leave you on your own.
I am your father and my love
I'll always give.

Brian listened attentively and then smiled; "I like those words!" he exclaimed. His face radiated a peace that I had never seen. His mother, who was present, was visibly moved ... "the words of your song are made for everyone ... thank you!"

This was our last meeting with Brian; shortly after, he died. I couldn't help feeling an immense gratitude to God who had touched him with his infinite and personal love.

L. M.

1) Refers to the moment in Jesus' passion when he cried out: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

2) Mt. 18:20.

The young and the Gospel

"Instead of going to a party at school, I went to the river to do the laundry because my mother didn't have time to do it."

"As I was coming out from the mill I met a poor man who asked me for something, so I gave him a portion of cornmeal."

"A person needed some help and I was the only one who could do what she needed, but she was angry with me and didn't have the courage to ask me for it. I went to her myself and told her that I could get what she needed."

"A grandma had slipped in the mud and gotten her dress dirty. She didn't feel like going to the market in that condition, so I went for her."

"As I was walking with my friend and we met a man who was exhausted because of the heat and thirst. We took care of him. We went to a house nearby to ask for some water.... There was none.... So I went to the spring which was very far away, while my friend stayed to comfort the man. I was able to bring some water to that man who could have died of thirst."

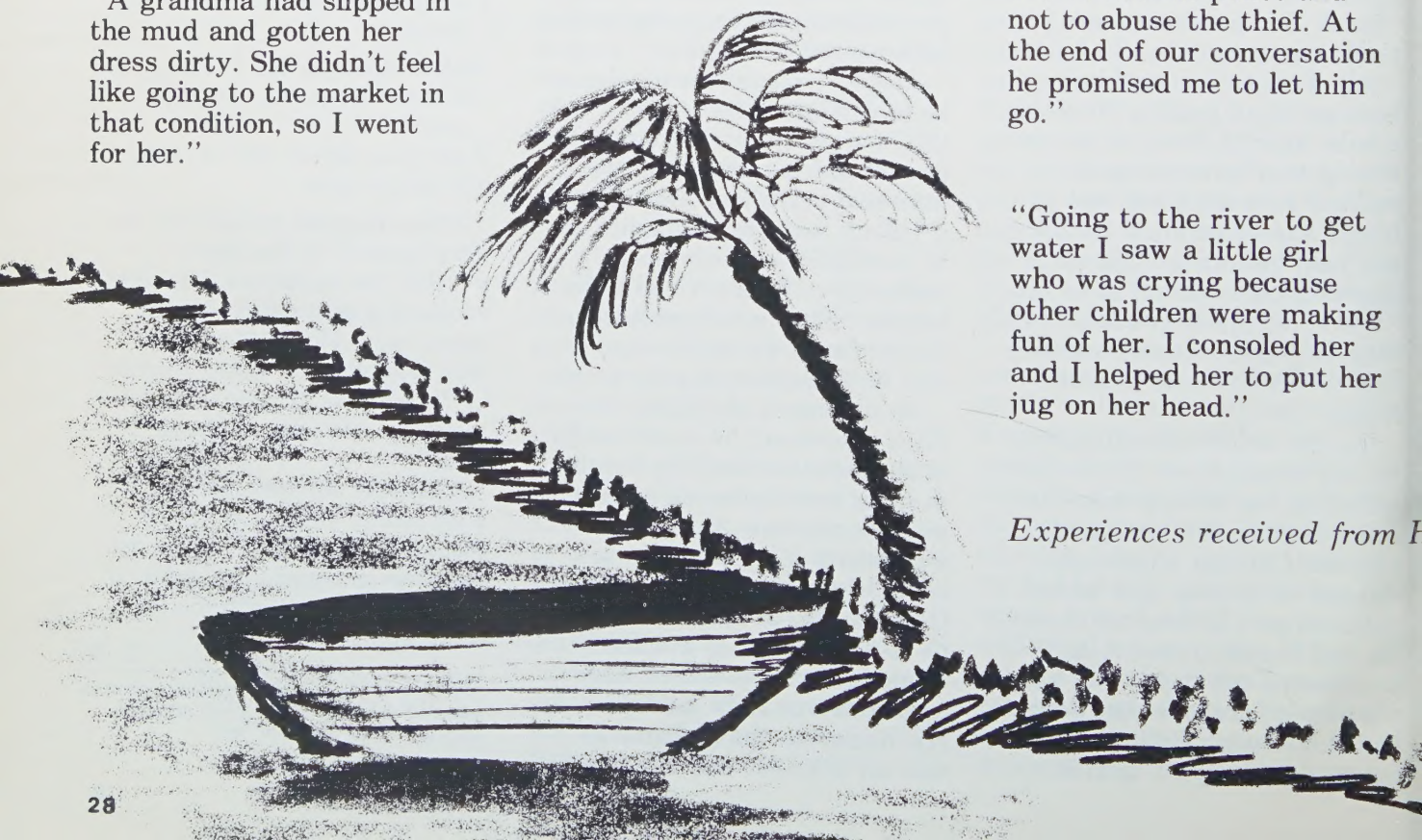
"A lady, coming from the market with a big basket on her head, was walking in front of me. She lost a bar of soap and she didn't even notice it. So I ran after her and gave it to her."

"A worker who came to my house to do a job, left his shoes at the door because they were muddy and he didn't want to dirty the house. I didn't want him to catch a cold so I lent him my sandals so that he could be more comfortable."

"One day I was selling coffee and the customer gave me too much money. I gave him back the right change."

"Wanting to free a thief (who had stolen something to survive), I spoke at length with the person who had been robbed and was holding him. I begged him not to call the police and not to abuse the thief. At the end of our conversation he promised me to let him go."

"Going to the river to get water I saw a little girl who was crying because other children were making fun of her. I consoled her and I helped her to put her jug on her head."



Experiences received from F

What is the Focolare Movement?

THE BEGINNINGS

FOCOLARE means "hearth," "family fireside." What first strikes people when they come in contact with members of the Focolare, whether in small groups or in large gatherings, is the atmosphere of a family. It is a family formed by many different people in various walks of life. The Focolare Movement is also known as the "Work of Mary." Under this name it was approved by Pope John XXIII in 1962.

The Focolare Movement began in 1943 in Italy. In the midst of the terrible destruction of World War II, Chiara Lubich realized that God is the only one worth living for. As a result, she began to center her life on the Gospel, together with a small group of young women who followed her. Their ideal became one of striving toward the fulfillment of Jesus' last prayer to the Father: "May they all be one" (Jn.17:21).

The life of Chiara and her first companions, and the spiritual way they spontaneously followed, gave rise to the unique form of spirituality of the Focolare Movement, a spirituality of unity. It has proved to be a powerful means of introducing the Gospel into modern life, of going to God together.

WHO ARE THE FOCOLARINI

Single men and women live in separate communities called Focolare Centers. Their principal aim is to achieve unity among themselves through mutual charity practiced twenty-four hours a day. They follow the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. They work as other laymen and women in regular jobs and professions.

Some married persons, even though continuing to live in their families, participate fully in the life of either the men's or women's Focolare Centers in their common effort to achieve this same unity. They are called "Married Focolarini" and form the backbone of a vast Movement within the Movement, called the New Family Movement.

THE VOLUNTEERS AND THE NEW HUMANITY MOVEMENT

The Volunteers, also called the "Volunteers of God," are a large group within the Focolare Movement; they would like to transform all human realities according to the Gospel spirit. The Volunteers are the backbone of the mass movement called New Humanity. The aim of this Movement is to help form a society made of men and women who are made "new" by the Gospel message and who can then bring new life to all fields of human activity (education, business, etc.). This results in new social relationships which, in turn, lead to the realization of new structures of society.

GEN

The new generations of the Focolare Movement form another Movement or, better, three movements: the Gen 2, the Gen 3 and the Gen 4 Movements, divided according to their various age groups. "Gen" stands for new generation. The Gen have committed themselves to living the Gospel message of love and to sharing with other youth the conviction they have that the Gospel is the answer to every question and the motive for everything they do.

THE MOVEMENT AMONG THE RELIGIOUS

Men and women religious — although they live according to their own rules and constitutions and are already a distinct part of the Church through their religious families — can also be associated with the Focolare.

Contact with the Movement helps them to focus their attention on the specific charism of their founders, and to see how it can be lived in the present time.

PRIESTS — PRIESTS' MOVEMENT —SEMINARIANS — PARISH MOVEMENT

Many diocesan priests are committed to living the spirituality of the Focolare Movement. Some of them live in community. They form the backbone of the Priests' Movement which is made up of priests who live the spirituality of unity.

FOCOLARE FAMILY

The largest group within the Focolare Movement is made up of men, women and young people who are connected with the Movement without having any formal ties with it. Their bond of unity stems from their acceptance of its spirit and their desire to live it.

ECUMENISM

The Movement not only crossed the political boundaries of more than 100 countries, it has also gone beyond the barriers erected for centuries between the various Christian Churches.

Ecumenical activities take place in the different parts of the world where the Movement exists.

In the past few years a promising, ongoing dialogue has been established with faithful of other religions.

SUMMER MARIAPOLIS

Summer meetings are held every year for those interested in the Movement and for those who wish to come into contact with it. For one week persons of all ages and walks of life are exposed to the spirituality of unity. Above all, they strive to practice it by creating among themselves a rapport that molds them into a community. It is intended to be a basic experience of such intense unity that the people will be able to bring it back into their own environments. And this is the most striking fruit of these conventions. They tend to be models of a world which lives according the Gospel.

PERMANENT MARIAPOLIS

The need to prolong the experience of the summer meetings brought about the birth of small cities called Permanent Mariapolis. They are made up of young men and women, as well as whole families, who are there for a designated period of time to be formed according to the Gospel spirit of unity.

They also attend classes in Sacred Scripture, Theology and Sociology and work for their own support.

MARIAPOLIS CENTERS

In addition to the Permanent Mariapolis, there are Mariapolis Centers, which are training centers for the members of the Movement.

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